Centipede™

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Centipede

DEEP IN THE ENCHANTED FOREST LIVES A BAND OF LITTLE ELVES. OLIVER IS THE LITTLEST OF THEM ALL ... BUT DOES THAT BUG HIM? NO WAY! NOT WITH SECRET FRIENDS LIKE THESE: SPIDER, FLEA, SCORPION, AND OF COURSE ... CENTIPEDE!!

EACH DAY AT LUNCH TIME, OLIVER AND HIS FRIENDS ENGAGE IN THE KIND OF GAMES THAT **ONLY** ELVES AND BUGS COULD ENJOY...

NOT TO **WORRY**, OLIVER--I'VE TAKEN *PRECAUTIONS* TO INSURE YOUR *SAFETY!*

IT'S *S-SLIPPERY!*

THAT'S *FINE* FOR *HIM*--BUT WHAT ABOUT MY *BACKS!?*

AND, AFTER SOME MORE GOOD CLEAN FUN, OLIVER SHARES HIS LUNCH WITH HIS MANY-LEGGED FRIENDS...OF COURSE, THE MENU IN THE ENCHANTED FOREST IS RATHER *LIMITED*, SINCE BERRY JAM AND MUSHROOM BREAD IS *ALL* THAT ELVES EAT!

I HOPE NO *ANTS* SHOW UP--THEY *ALWAYS* RUIN OUR PICNICS!

CHOMP!

CHOMP!

NIBBLE!

BUT SOON...

ONE O'CLOCK! LUNCH IS OVER!

THAT'S MY *CUE*--BACK TO THE MUSHROOM PATCH!

YOU GUYS CAN KEEP ON PLAYING--BUT THIS ELF HAS WORK TO DO!

SO IT'S TIME FOR ME TO HUG A BUG, AND SAY GOODBYE TILL TOMORROW!!

G'BYE...

...OLLIE...

...SEE YA...

...TOMORROW...

...AND DON'T FORGET TO BRING MUSHROOM BREAD, Y'HEAR!

AND SO, WITH A TWINGE OF ELFEN SADNESS, OLIVER SETS HIS INSECTS ASIDE, TO HEAD BACK TO THE VILLAGE.

BUT WHILE OLIVER'S PLAYTIME HAS ENDED, HIS ADVENTURE IS ABOUT TO BEGIN!!

WITHIN MOMENTS, OLIVER ARRIVES AT HIS HUMBLE ABODE ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE VILLAGE, THERE TO BEGIN THE HARVESTING OF THE WINTER'S MUSHROOM SUPPLY.

BUT IT IS DESTINED TO BE A *BITTER HARVEST...*

FOR, HIGH ON *MT. MUSHMORE*, A PARTICULARLY *EVIL WIZARD* HAS A PARTICULARLY EVIL PLAN..

heh heh...NOW *THERE'S* AN ESPECIALLY *NICE*-LOOKING MUSHROOM PATCH...

...JUST *RIPE* FOR *ROTTING!!*

THIS *BLAST* OUGHTA *REALLY* SHAKE 'EM!

ZAP

AND WITH ONE BROAD STROKE OF HIS GNARLED HANDS, THE WIZARD'S "*FRIGHTENING ROD*" SENDS OUT A BOLT OF *TERROR-FIED* ENERGY--

WHICH, NOT-SO-COINCIDENTALLY, BLASTS ONE BEAUTIFUL MUSHROOM PATCH TO SMITHEREENS, AND SCARES ONE INNOCENT ELF ***SILLY!!***

KA-BLAM!

YEEOW!!

WHEN THE SMOKE CLEARS, A ***GRUESOME*** TRANSFORMATION IS REVEALED TO OLIVER AND HIS PARENTS!

OLIVER! ARE YOU ALL RIGHT!?

LOOK, DEAR! OUR MUSHROOM PATCH HAS BEEN TURNED TO ***MUSH!***

NOT JUST ***MUSH***, DAD-- ***TOADSTOOLS!!***

AND THEY'RE NOT JUST ***TOAD-STOOLS*** EITHER, OLIVER--THEY'RE THE ***SMELLIEST, YUCKIEST, GROSSEST*** TOADSTOOLS EVER MADE--A PIECE OF BLACK ***MAGIC***, COURTESY OF THAT WILY WIZARD!

SNIFF! SNIFF! PHEW! OUR WHOLE CROP-- GONE! NOW WHAT WILL WE EAT THIS WINTER?

TOAD-STOOLS?

THE WIZARD IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS! HE'S DESTROYED ONE PATCH AFTER ANOTHER! HE WANTS US TO LEAVE THIS FERTILE VILLAGE SO HE CAN PLANT POISON TOAD-STOOLS HERE FOR HIS PUTRID POTIONS--BUT WE'LL NEVER LEAVE--EVER!!

WORD OF THIS LATEST ATTACK SPREADS QUICKLY THROUGH THE VILLAGE-- AND THE ELVES--AS YOU MIGHT EXPECT-- ARE MORE THAN A LITTLE TICKED OFF!

IT'S GETTING SO IT'S NO FUN BEING AN ELF ANYMORE!

FOR SURE!

AS ONE, THE ANGRY ELVES RACE TO THE OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN TO SEE THE NEWEST BATCH OF TERRIBLE TOADSTOOLS AND PLAN THEIR NEXT MOVE.

THE ELDERS DECIDE THAT THE WIZARD MUST BE ***STOPPED***.. AND THAT ***EVERYONE*** MUST HELP--

WELL...***ALMOST*** EVERYONE...

BUT WHY CAN'T ***I*** GO, DAD?

BECAUSE YOU'RE TOO LITTLE--AND THE WIZARD ESPECIALLY ***DISLIKES*** LITTLE ELVES! YOU STAY HERE AND CHOP DOWN THE TOADSTOOLS--WE ***MUST*** TRY TO REPLANT BEFORE WINTER--OR WE MAY ***STARVE!!***

SEE YA'ROUND, ***PIPSQUEAK***-- HOPE THAT ***AXE*** ISN'T TOO ***BIG*** FOR YOU TO HANDLE!

ALAS, SUCH ARE THE TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS OF BEING THE VILLAGE'S ***LITTLEST*** ELF!

THE VILLAGERS BEGIN THEIR TREK UP THE NARROWLY WINDING MOUNTAIN PATH IN SEARCH OF... *EVIL WIZARDS!*

WHILE DOWN IN THE ONCE-FERTILE VALLEY, *OLIVER* PREPARES TO TAKE A *WHACK* AT THE *TOADSTOOL* PROBLEM...

...EVEN IF I *AM* THE LITTLEST ELF!!

SOON THE VILLAGERS REACH THE TREACHEROUS CLIFFS OF *MT. MUSHMORE*, WHERE THE WIZARD HANGS OUT...

Heh, heh!

UNFORTUNATELY, THAT MEANS *HE* HAS *THEM* RIGHT WHERE HE WANTS THEM!!

LOOKING FOR SOMEONE?

THERE HE IS! WATCH OUT!

I THINK WE'RE IN TROUBLE!

YOU SAID IT! SPARKS OF FRIGHTENING LIGHTNING SHOWER DOWN ON THE VILLAGERS AS THE WIZARD DOES HIS EVIL BUSINESS!

AND, ONCE AGAIN, WHEN THE SMOKE CLEARS--YOU GUESSED IT--TOADSTOOLS!!

AT LAST I'VE TRIUMPHED!

Hee Hee! NO MORE ELVES! TONS OF TOADSTOOLS! I LOVE IT!!

TROLLING DOWN THE TOADSTOOL-LADEN PATH, THE *WIZARD ADMIRES* HIS DIRTY WORK...

IT MAY LACK *IMAGINATION*, BUT IT GETS THE JOB DONE!

BUT SUDDENLY...

eh?

THOK! THOK!

A TINY ELF! HACKING AWAY AT MY *PRECIOUS* TOADSTOOLS! I'LL PUT AN END TO THAT--

THOK! THOK!

ONE EX-ELF-- COMING UP!

ND DOWN BELOW...

whew! THIS SURE IS HARD WORK!

I'LL SWOOP IN CLOSE AND TURN HIM INTO A *TOADSTOOL*-- A *LITTLE* ONE, BUT A TOADSTOOL STILL!

AS THE WIZARD'S SIGHTS FOCUS ON THE FEAST BELOW, HE MUTTERS THE TRADITIONAL *BAT-WING* INCANTATION-- AND PREPARES TO DIVE!

DOWN, DOWN THE WIZARD PLUMMETS, HIS ONLY THOUGHT...

IT'S TOADSTOOL TIME!!

BUT, AS THE EVIL SORCERER PREPARES TO FINISH OFF THE UNKNOWING ELF, HIS WICKED SHADOW GIVES HIM AWAY!

KPLOOSH!

NOT A SECOND TOO SOON, OLIVER DROPS HIS AXE AND RUNS AS FAST AS HIS FURRY LITTLE FEET CAN CARRY HIM!

THE *WIZARD!* BUT WHERE ARE THE *VILLAGERS?*

SPLAT

SPLAT!

IN A PANIC, OLIVER *RACES* TO THE VILLAGE IN SEARCH OF HELP-- NOT REAL ZING THAT THE TOWN IS *DESERTED*..

HELP! HELP!!

N-NO ONE'S HERE... I'M *ALONE!*

AND HE'S *STILL* AFTER ME!

TRY AND *ESCAPE*, WILL HE?

I'LL ZAP *EVERYTHING* IN SIGHT UNTIL I CATCH HIM!

AND POOR OLIVER CAN ONLY WATCH HELPLESSLY AS THE WIZARD ZAPS ROOFTOP AFTER ROOFTOP INTO TOADSTOOL *PATÉ!*

CURSES!! WHERE *IS* HE?

I'LL FIND HIM IF IT'S THE *LAST* THING I D--

BUT, LOST IN HIS DESTRUCTIVE FRENZY, THE WIZARD FAILS TO SEE--

CRUNCH

--UNTIL IT'S TOO LATE!

HE-HE'S HEADED THIS WAY-- I-I'M *DONE* FOR--

HEY OLIVER!! OPEN YOUR EYES--THE WIZARD'S "FRIGHTENING ROD" IS RIGHT UNDER YOUR NOSE!!

GRACK!

GEE...THE WIZARD'S WAND...

IT SURE DOESN'T LOOK MAGIC!!

HELP!

I DON'T THINK IT--

YEOW!

AS IF RESENTING OLIVER'S THOUGHTS, THE MAGIC STICK BLASTS OFF!!!

STOP--- PLEASE?

TALK ABOUT *STICK-Y* SITUATIONS! OLIVER HANGS ON FOR DEAR LIFE AS THE *HOT* ROD DRAGS HIM THROUGH THE WOODS!

I SAID **STOP!**

FINALLY, OLIVER REACHES THE *BREAKING* POINT, AND... *ASSERTS HIMSELF!*

AND AS THOUGH HE HAD EARNED ITS RESPECT, THE WAND GENTLY LOWERS *OLIVER* TO THE FOREST FLOOR!

I KNEW YOUR *BARK* WAS WORSE THAN YOUR *BITE!*

YOU'RE NOT SUCH A *BAD* STICK AFTER ALL!

BUT WHEN THE STICK LETS HIM DOWN, OLIVER FINDS HIMSELF IN THE MIDDLE OF... ***NOWHERE!!***

I'D BETTER ***FIND*** MY ***FOLKS*** BEFORE THE ***WIZARD*** FINDS ***ME!***

MOM!? DAD!? ***ANYBODY!?***

THERE'S ***GOOD*** NEWS AND ***BAD*** NEWS FOR OLIVER: THE ***GOOD*** NEWS IS THAT THE VILLAGERS ARE RIGHT BEHIND HIM; THE ***BAD*** NEWS IS THAT THEY'RE ***STILL*** A BUNCH OF TOADSTOOLS-- AND OLIVER DOESN'T KNOW IT!

BUT THE ***WORST*** NEWS OF ALL IS THAT OLIVER IS BEING ***WATCHED...***

THAT BRATTY ELF!!!

HE'S GOT MY ROD--AND I'M PRACTICALLY ***POWERLESS*** WITHOUT IT!

BUT I ***STILL*** HAVE A ***FEW*** TRICKS LEFT!!

THE EVIL WIZARD JOURNEYS *DEEP* INTO THE FOREST TO THE *E.B.S.C.* (*ENCHANTED BUGS SOCIAL CLUB*) TO PUT "*OPERATION STICK RETRIEVAL*" INTO EFFECT!

A GREAT WIZARD LIKE *ME* RELYING ON *INSECTS* FOR HELP--THAT *REALLY* BUGS ME!

ANYBODY HOME? CAN I COME IN?

CLUB MEMBERS ONLY

ENTER AT YOUR OWN RISK!

TO WHAT DO WE *HUMBLE BUGS* OWE THE HONOR OF THIS VISIT?

HUMBLE BUGS?-- HUMBUG! I HAVE A PROPOSITION FOR YOU!

GET MY WAND BACK FROM OLIVER, THAT ELFEN *RUNT*, AND I SHALL *REWARD* YOU WITH YOUR WEIGHT IN TOADSTOOLS!

WE DON'T NEED ANY TOADSTOOLS--IN FACT, WE *HATE* THEM!

BESIDES--WE *LIKE* THAT "*ELFEN RUNT!*"

SO *BUG OFF*-- OR SIT IN ON THE *CARD GAME!!*

SO YOU REFUSE? I HAVE WAYS OF *MAKING* YOU DO MY BIDDING--PERHAPS A LITTLE *HYPNOSIS* WILL DO THE TRICK!

ZAP!

NOW--*heh heh*-- GO FIND THE ELF-- AND RETRIEVE MY WAND--*BEGONE!!*

AND I'LL BE *FOLLOW-ING* YOU GUYS--SO *NO FUNNY STUFF!*

NOW--GET *CRAWLING!!*

BUT AS THE *HYPNOTIZED* BUGS GO OFF, THE LAST AND LITTLEST SEGMENT OF THE CENTIPEDE *STILL* HAS A *MIND* OF ITS OWN!

EVIL IS *AFOOT!* I'VE GOT TO *WARN* *OLIVER!!*

THE 'PEDE RACES THROUGH THE WOODS AHEAD OF THE OTHERS, UNTIL, HUFFING AND PUFFING, HE FINDS THE *WAY-WARD* ELF...

O-O-OL-OLIVER ;Gasp; I'VE GOT TO ;Gasp; TELL YOU-;Gasp;!

HI, *'PEDE!* LONG TIME NO SEE!.. HEY! *WHERE'S THE REST OF YOU?*

HAVE I GOT A *STORY* FOR YOU GUYS!

THE OTHER BUGS-- ;GASP! COMING FOR YOU--

GREAT! I WAS GETTING KINDA LONELY! HERE THEY COME NOW!

OVER HERE, GANG!!

BUT THE WIZARD'S *HYPNOTIZED* THEM! THEY'RE OUT TO GET *YOU* AND THE *WAND*! *RUN FOR IT!!!*

Hmmm... NOW THAT YOU *MENTION* IT, THEY *DO* SEEM TO BE ACTING KIND OF *FUNNY!!*

BAM!

THERE'S NOTHING *FUNNY* ABOUT A BUNCH OF *BERSERK BUGS!* WE'VE GOT TO GET AWAY! THAT *TREE!* IT'S OUR ONLY *HOPE!*

I'M *WAY* AHEAD OF YOU *'PEDE!* LET'S GET CLIMBING!

THEY'RE *STILL* AFTER US! THEY'LL BE UP HERE IN *NO TIME*--UNLESS--THAT *STICK!* IT'S *MAGIC!* *USE IT!*

WE'VE GOT NO CHOICE! THEY'RE PRACTICALLY *HERE* ALREADY! YOU'VE GOT TO *CONCEN-TRATE*--THINK *GOOD* THOUGHTS--THEN THE *MAGIC* WILL WORK *FOR* YOU!!

NO WAY! I'D RATHER BE *UP* A TREE THAN *FLYING OVER* IT!

YOU GOTTA BE KIDDIN'!!

JUST *TRY* IT, OKAY?

CONCENTRATE... CONCENTRATE... GOT TO THINK GOOD THOUGHTS... LEMME SEE... er... uh...

I HOPE THIS WORKS, OLIVER-- I'M TOO *YOUNG* TO BE A POISON TOADSTOOL!

Hmmm.. MOM... DAD... BERRY JAM... MUSHR--

ZAP!

A MUSHROOM! OF COURSE! WHAT COULD BE NICER THAN A HARMLESS MUSHROOM?

I ALWAYS *KNEW* YOU COULD DO IT, KID!

WE'RE SAFE! WE'RE SAFE! WE'RE...

Uh-oh! IF WE'RE SAFE, THEN HOW COME I'M TREMBLING LIKE A LEAF!

IT'S NOT YOU, 'PEDE-- IT'S THE TREE!

IT'S SCORPION-- HE'S HAMMERING AWAY AT THE TREE LIKE IT WAS A PUNCHING BAG!!

GUESS THERE'S ONLY ONE THING TO DO!

WHAM!

SCORPION'S BEEN TURNED INTO A MUSHROOM TOO! THIS MAGIC STICK WORKS LIKE A CHARM!

DIDN'T I TELL YA SO, OLLIE M' BOY?!

OLIVER! HERE COMES FLEA! GIVE HIM A GOOD ZAP BEFORE HE GETS CLOSE ENOUGH TO TICKLE US SILLY!

I'M GETTING THE KNACK OF IT, PEDE -- WATCH THIS!!

FLEE, FLEA!

RUN! RUN! RUN!

HOP! HOP! HOP! HOP! HOP!

ND NOW-- FOR THE *MAIN* EVENT...

ON THE *COUNT* OF *THREE*... YET *ANOTHER* MUSHROOM!

BE *GENTLE* WITH HIM, KID-- HE'S MY *FRONT END*!!

BUT OLIVER *UNDERESTIMATES* THE MOST *FORMIDABLE* OPPONENT OF THEM ALL!

I-I GOT A *COUPLE*-- BUT THEY JUST KEEP *COMING*!!

WHA?--HE'S BROKEN INTO *SEGMENTS*! I-- I HAVE *UNDERESTIMATED* THE MOST *FORMIDABLE* OPPONENT OF ALL!

Y NOW, THE WIZARD HAS COME ON THE SCENE TO RETRIEVE HIS ROD IN VICTORY!

Heh heh! THE CENTIPEDE IS ALL BROKEN UP!

I CAN'T ZAP THEM ALL!

WE'RE DOOMED!

THE WIZARD'S CELEBRATION BEGINS--ALBEIT A BIT PREMATURELY!

HA HA! I LOVE IT WHEN I WIN!

NOT SO FAST, WIZARD! YOU MAY BE LIGHT ON YOUR FEET, BUT I'M ONE JUMP AHEAD OF YOU!!

QUIT BLUFFING, KID--IT'S ALL OVER FOR US!

THIS IS NO BLUFF, 'PEDE-- WATCH THIS!!

ZOOP!

ZOOP?

SUDDENLY, THE EVIL WIZARD IS SUSPENDED IN MID-AIR!!

UN-HYPNOTIZE THOSE PEDE PARTS, OR I'LL TURN YOU INTO A MUSHROOM TOO!!

NO! NO! NOT A MUSHROOM! ANY-THING BUT THAT!!*

LET HIM HAVE IT, KID -- RIGHT BETWEEN THE EVIL EYES!!

* FOR A TOADSTOOL-LOVING WIZARD, ENDING UP AS A MUSHROOM IS THE ABSOLUTE PITS!!

OKAY ALREADY! I'LL DO IT! I'LL DO IT!!

GREAT! NOW-- GET CRACKIN'!

NOW WHO'S AFRAID OF THE BIG BAD WIZARD!

I'M SURE TO NEED GLASSES AFTER THIS WORKOUT!

ZAP!

ZAP!

ZAP!

ZAP!

AND ALL AT ONCE...

W-WHERE ARE WE?

WE'RE ALL OVER THE PLACE!

IT WAS THAT WIZARD!

HE HYPNOTIZED US!

WHAT'S HE DOIN' UP THERE?

JUST HANGIN' OUT!

LET'S GET HIM!

W-WHAT HAPPENED?

I FEEL LIKE I'VE BEEN A MUSHROOM IN A PREVIOUS LIFE!

BEFORE ANYONE DOES ANYTHING--WIZARD!! WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO MY PARENTS AND THE OTHER VILLAGERS?

I-er-uh-TURNED THEM INTO POISON TOADSTOOLS... I-er-DON'T SUPPOSE AN APOLOGY WOULD HELP A GREAT DEAL?

TSK! TSK!

WHAT A CREEP!

YOU SAID IT!

YOU'RE GONNA LEAD ME TO THEM, WIZARD-- BUT FIRST, I'LL CHANGE MY FRIENDS BACK TO NORMAL!

AND WITH YET ANOTHER WAVE OF HIS WAND, THE THREE MUSH-KETEERS ARE TRANS-FORMED BACK INTO...

SCORPION...

...FLEA...

...AND SPIDER MAKES THREE!

SOON, AT THE FOOT OF MT. MUSHMORE...

THE SUSPENSION IS KILLING ME--TURN THEM BACK TO ELVES-- PLEASE?

ONE GOOD ZAP SHOULD TURN THE VILLAGERS BACK TO NORMAL!

IT'S GREAT TO BE BACK TOGETHER AGAIN!

ZAPP!

OLIVER! I THOUGHT I TOLD YOU TO CHOP DOWN THOSE TOADSTOOLS!!

THINGS ARE BACK TO NORMAL ALL RIGHT!

AND IF YOU'RE WONDERING WHAT HAPPENED TO THE EVIL WIZARD...

LIVER GAVE HIM SUCH A ZAP...

ZAP!

NO NO! DON'T SHOOT!

SORRY, WIZ-- THIS IS ONE STORY THAT'S HEADED FOR A HAPPY ENDING-- AND THAT INCLUDES YOU TOO!

WHY YOU LITTLE...

ER-UH-I- THAT IS- GULP!

I DO HOPE I'LL GET THE OPPORTUNITY TO HELP YOU FINE ELVES WITH YOUR MUSH-ROOM HARVEST!

WITH THE HELP OF HIS NEW AND IMPROVED "NOT-SO-FRIGHTENING ROD" OLIVER TURNED ALL THE TOADSTOOLS BACK INTO MUSHROOMS...

FOR HIS HEROIC DEEDS, OLIVER WAS VOTED ELF OF THE YEAR, WHICH, AS EVERYONE KNOWS, IS WORTH ITS WEIGHT IN MUSHROOM BREAD-- NOT BAD FOR THE LITTLEST ELF OF ALL!

THAT'S MY BABY!

THINK I'LL QUIT WHILE I'M A HEAD!!

AND WHAT ABOUT THE LITTLEST 'PEDE? HE WAS SENT TO THE FRONT OF THE LINE, WHERE HE GUIDES THE OTHER 'PEDES TO THIS VERY DAY!

THE END

Cheapdeuthe

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